



Bill Ulfelder © Jonathan Grassi

From the Executive Director

Dear Friend,

I am thrilled to share a significant milestone in our efforts to ensure clean water for New Yorkers. Recently, voters in Suffolk County, Long Island, approved Proposition 2, a crucial step toward safeguarding our precious waters. In so many ways, water defines life on Long Island—from the water we drink to the waters in which we recreate, swim and fish. Millions of people and countless other species depend on it. This victory, which will generate billions of dollars to restore and protect water quality, is a testament to our commitment to protecting New York's water from pollution and ensuring a sustainable future.

With your support, we can continue making a lasting impact, creating a cleaner, healthier environment for our communities and future generations.

Thank you.

Warm regards,

Bill Ulfelder, Executive Director



Ospreys, which thrive on Long Island, rely on clean waters to hunt fish. © Dale Erickson/TNC Photo Contest 2019

Long Island's Clean Water Victory

Twenty years ago, The Nature Conservancy acquired 13,425 acres of underwater lands in Great South Bay, marking the beginning of a focused effort to restore water quality on Long Island.

One goal at Bluepoints Bottomlands Preserve was to test a hypothesis: Could reviving the bay's depleted clam population rejuvenate the entire ecosystem? After extensive work and research, we discovered that nitrogen pollution from septic systems and fertilizers had been degrading water quality for decades.

"Pollutants seep into the ground and flow into our creeks and bays, causing harmful algae blooms and damaging our waters," explains Carl LoBue, The Nature Conservancy's oceans director in New York. "This problem isn't confined to Great South Bay but is widespread across Long Island."

In response, we addressed pollution at its source by collaborating with advocates and government officials to launch innovative programs that replace polluting septic systems with clean-water alternatives.

This monumental victory will ensure clean drinking water, conserve open spaces and revitalize beaches, bays and harbors.

With your support, our efforts have set a precedent for restoring marine life across the island. And coastal communities nationwide can now see the potential of unified action for clean water.



Marine scientist Carl LoBue observes a hard clam. © Rebecca Kusa/TNC

Turning the Tide on Water Pollution: An Interview with Oceans Director Carl LoBue

Why did The Nature Conservancy decide to focus on reducing nitrogen pollution on Long Island?

Over a decade ago, our research conclusively showed that nitrogen pollution was harming shellfish beds, killing seagrass meadows and destroying salt marshes. Although the problem was widespread, it was solvable. We knew that reducing nitrogen pollution would bring back these degraded habitats and help protect Long Island's bays, lakes and the sole-source drinking water supply for three million residents.

How has The Nature Conservancy been tackling these issues?

With science as our foundation, we needed to communicate not only the problem and available remedies, but also the high costs of inaction. From there, and with the public's support, our policy team helped enact changes, including regulations to advance septic upgrades. With partners, we raised nearly \$1 billion for sewage treatment upgrades in western Long Island. And in Suffolk County, voters overwhelmingly passed a landmark referendum in 2024 for funding to replace cesspools and septic systems.

What's next in terms of protecting Long Island's water quality?

Our next challenge is to ensure that septic replacement projects and wastewater treatment system upgrades happen quickly and efficiently in ways that work for all residents and businesses. Restoring and protecting water on Long Island is a big task, but we're ready for it. By working together and embracing innovative solutions, we will safeguard our waters for people today and generations to come.

NATURE NEW YORK

New York supports conservation initiatives around the globe. Here's a recent highlight:

6.4 million
hectares of forests and wetlands to be improved and conserved in the Amazon



Squirrel monkeys © Luis Espin/TNC Photo Contest

Unlocking Millions for Amazon Conservation Programs

With the support of The Nature Conservancy and partners, the Republic of Ecuador recently announced the completion of a groundbreaking debt conversion deal. This agreement will unlock \$460 million for the Amazon Biocorridor Program over the next 17 years—the largest conservation funding achieved through a debt conversion!

This Nature Bond project is an innovative response to the urgent threats facing the Amazon, one of the planet's most biodiverse regions. Through this initiative, Ecuador will enhance the management of 4.6 million hectares of existing protected areas, conserve an additional 1.8 million hectares of forests and wetlands, and safeguard 18,000 kilometers of rivers.

This is our first Nature Bonds project that covers both land and fresh water, and our sixth successful debt conversion deal.